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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, who has ordained the seasons of our lives, thank You for the steadfastness of Your mercy and long suffering.

Today, inspire our lawmakers to open themselves to the gift of Your presence, remembering that You are always with them. Where there is fear, give courage. Where there is anxiety, give peace. Where there is despair, give hope. Where there is sadness, give joy. May our Senators joyfully encounter You on a daily basis. Lord, inspire them to hear Your words and obey Your precepts.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 20, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, for decades, both parties have shared a desire to invest in our Nation's infrastructure. It is one of the few issues here in Washington where our two parties can consistently work together, and it has been years since Congress passed a significant stand-alone investment. We are hoping to change that this year.

Nearly a month ago—a month ago—a bipartisan group of Senators came together, along with the White House, and agreed on a framework for a bipartisan infrastructure bill. So last night I moved to set up a process for the Senate to consider that bipartisan framework.

On Wednesday, the Senate will take the first procedural vote on a shell bill, merely a vehicle to get the whole process started. It is not a final deadline for legislative text. It is not a cynical ploy. It is not a fish-or-cut-bait moment. It is not an attempt to jam anyone. It is only a signal that the Senate is ready to get the process started, something the Senate has routinely done on other bipartisan bills this year.

All a “yes” vote on the motion to proceed means is simply that the Senate is ready to begin debating a bipartisan infrastructure bill—no more, no

less. We have waited a month. It is time to move forward.

My colleagues have heard me speak for months about making progress on two different tracks of infrastructure. After the group of Senators reached a deal with the White House, I endorsed it and I announced I wanted to put their agreement on the floor of the Senate in July. This week's vote is an honest attempt to get something done, to get the ball rolling on the Senate floor.

That is why I am giving the maximum amount of flexibility to our Senate colleagues who are negotiating this bill. If the bipartisan group can finalize the text of their agreement by Thursday, I will offer it as the pending substitute amendment. If, for whatever reason, the bipartisan group isn't ready with their final text by Thursday, I will offer an amendment consisting only of the bipartisan infrastructure bills that have already gone through our Senate committees and are actually the core of the bipartisan infrastructure framework. They are the water bill, the highway bill, the rail and safety bill, and the energy bill.

All of them are bipartisan, all of them have gone through committee, and all of them received overwhelming Republican votes. Why wouldn't our Republican colleagues want to move to proceed to debate that bill, at the very minimum, even if we don't have agreement on the broader bipartisan bill?

Just to go over the record, the Environment and Public Works Committee reported the water bill, passed by voice vote, unanimous, in committee and then 89 to 2 on the Senate floor. The Environment and Public Works Committee reported the highway bill, passed by 20 to 0. The Commerce Committee reported the rail and safety bill, passed by 25 to 3. And the Energy and Natural Resources Committee report of the energy bill passed 13 to 7.

So once again, to repeat, this week's vote is an honest attempt to get something done, to get the ball rolling on

• This “buller” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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the Senate floor, after a month, after the agreement was reached by the bipartisan group and the White House. That is why I am giving the maximum amount of flexibility to our Senate colleagues who are negotiating the bill. If the bipartisan group can finalize their agreement by Thursday, I will offer it as the pending substitute amendment, as I mentioned before. I just wanted to repeat that so people hear it loud and clear.

The bills I mentioned are the lowest common denominator and the most agreeable starting point, a package of bipartisan bills that nearly all the Senators have already supported this year, a package of bills that the bipartisan group is using as the basis of their framework. And once it is on the floor, we can then debate, amend, and work from there. It is not the final word.

There will be no doubt many Senators would want to offer additional items from the bipartisan framework or other issues: from transit to broadband, to resiliency, and more. And, of course, if the bipartisan group finalizes their product over the weekend, Senators can offer it as an amendment at that point, and I will make sure that that amendment is in order.

Let me repeat. Even if the text of the bipartisan framework isn't ready by Thursday and we agree to make the package of bipartisan bills that I mentioned the starting point, Senators can still work on the bipartisan framework and offer it as an amendment later on.

The bottom line is very simple. If Senators agree to start debate, there will be many, many opportunities for the bipartisan group to make their agreement the base of the bill. But if Republican Senators refuse to start debate, they would be denying the Senate an opportunity to consider the bipartisan amendment.

And this is not a new process. We have used it regularly here in the Senate, on the anti-Asian hate crimes bill, the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act. On both of those, the Senate agreed to start debate, just to proceed on a base bill, a shell bill. It took several weeks of amendments before everyone was ready to move forward, eventually and successfully. Both measures passed with significant bipartisan support.

If we did it there—on the anti-Asian hate bill, on the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act—we can do it here. There is no reason we can't do it here with infrastructure.

Look, Senators of good will on both sides want to finish the bipartisan infrastructure bill before the August recess. That is certainly my goal. But in order to finish the bill, we first need to agree to start. Let me repeat that. But in order to finish the bill, we first need to agree to start. That is the first step.

Let's all agree to start. That is what this week's vote is about, and I hope my Republican colleagues will join us in beginning debate.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, right now, there is a fire burning in Oregon the size of New York City. A heat wave recently rolled through the Pacific Northwest that melted power lines and cracked roadways in two. Hurricanes and flooding in the East have battered one community after the other. Earlier this year, a snowstorm engulfed the typically scorching State of Texas and claimed the lives of hundreds—hundreds—of people. And, of course, we saw what happened in Europe with the flooding.

These extreme, once-in-a-century weather events are now commonplace. The dangers of climate change are here, and they are real. Fighting climate change will take not only new technologies and new ways of thinking but something more basic: It will take people—people, lots of people—working together to fight climate change from the ground up.

This morning, I joined with my Democratic colleagues from the House and Senate to push a bold, new approach to fighting climate change that will help create thousands of good-paying jobs in the process: the Civilian Climate Corps, CCC.

The idea at the core of the Civilian Climate Corps harkens back to the New Deal, when hundreds of thousands of Americans were put to work on conservation and infrastructure projects across the country. During the Great Depression, President Roosevelt needed ways to put Americans to work and to do it fast, and he found a way to do it while having those workers do something enormously productive for their country: building public works and dams and bridges and airfields and flood and forest-fire prevention.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, as it was called at the time, was a brilliant idea—a success—that should be harnessed once again, this time to fight climate change.

The bottom line: We need a CCC for the 21st century. We can put Americans to work on climate and resiliency projects. We can put Americans to work on clean energy initiatives across the country. We can put Americans to work helping poorer and more disconnected communities handle the challenge of climate change. And we can create hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs, particularly focusing on the poorer communities, the communities of color that have been left out in the past.

The Civilian Climate Corps can be one of the largest employment projects and one of the largest environmental projects at the same time. I believe the Senate should work to make this a reality this year. I believe the CCC, the Civilian Climate Corps, should be one of the pillars of the American Jobs and Family Plan. As majority leader, I will ensure that CCC will be included in the upcoming budget reconciliation package in as big and bold a way as possible.

VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, later, the Senate will pass a long-overdue fix to the Crime Victims Fund to help Americans stitch back their lives after falling victim to violent crime.

As hard as it is to suffer the trauma of a violent crime, survivors almost always face enormous financial hardship in the immediate aftermath. Just think about healthcare or mental health services for victims of human trafficking or sexual assault, emergency housing for victims of serious domestic abuse, legal fees for those who try to pursue justice for the crime committed against them. Those services can cost tens of thousands of dollars. So for nearly 35 years, the Justice Department has operated a Crime Victims Fund that uses money from Federal convictions and fines to help survivors of violent crime. It is a simple idea. It has helped thousands and thousands of Americans during the most challenging moments of their lives.

But today, this popular and effective program is in danger of going into the red. Compared to 5 years ago, the Crime Victims Fund could fall to less than one-twentieth—one-twentieth—of its former size by the end of the next fiscal year. Well, the Senate is not going to abandon Americans who survived violent crimes. Today, the Senate will pass legislation to replenish the Crime Victims Fund and set it on a path toward long-term stability. The Crime Victims Fund has been a beacon of hope and healing for countless survivors over the decades. With today's vote, survivors of violent crime can rest assured that it will continue to be that beacon of hope and healing for decades more to come.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2382

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2382) to authorize the National Cyber Director to accept details from other elements of the Federal Government on non-reimbursable basis, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will now be placed on the calendar.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.